Ascension crake

Drawing of the skull

The **Ascension crake** (*Mundia elpenor*) is an extinct flightless bird that previously lived on Ascension Island in the South Atlantic Ocean. Like many other flightless birds on isolated islands, it was a rail. It was declared extinct by Groombridge in 1994; BirdLife International confirmed this in 2000 and 2004.

The bird was endemic to Ascension Island. Numerous subfossil bones of the bird have been found in deposits at the base of vertical fumaroles. Peter Mundy, a 17th century merchant and traveler gave an account of the bird and made a sketch of it when he visited Ascension Island in June 1656. It was described by Mundy as:

> a strange kind of fowle, much bigger then our sterlings ore stares: collour gray or dappled, white and blacke feathers intermixed, eies red like rubies, wings very imperfitt, such as wherewith they cannot raise themselves from the ground. They were taken running, in which they are exceeding swift, helping themselves a little with their wings (as it is said of the estridge), shortt billed, cloven footed, thatt can neither fly nor swymme.

It most likely lived in the near-desert areas of the island and primarily ate sooty tern (*Sterna fuscata*) eggs. It is probable that it became extinct after rats were introduced to the island in the 18th century, but it may have survived until the introduction of feral cats in 1815.

The bird was regarded by Storrs Olson as a relative of *Atlantisia rogersi*,[2] but recent analysis (Bourne et al., 2003) has shown that the differences between the two are greater than previously appreciated. The new genus *Mundia* (named after the discoverer Peter Mundy) was created in 2003.

Ascension crake	
Drawing by Peter Mundy, 1656	
Conservation status	
Extinct (IUCN 3.1)[1]	
Scientific classification	
Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Aves
Order:	Gruiformes
Family:	Rallidae
Genus:	†*Mundia* Bourne, Ashmole, & Simmons, 2003
Species:	†***M. elpenor***
Binomial name	
†***Mundia elpenor*** (Olson, 1973)	

References

1. BirdLife International (2012). "*Mundia elpenor*" (https://www.iucnredlist.org/details/22728746/0). *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. **2012**. Retrieved 26 November 2013.
2. Olson, Storrs L. (1973). "Evolution of the rails of the South Atlantic islands (Aves: Rallidae)". *Smithsonian Contributions to Zoology* (152): 1–53. doi:10.5479/si.00810282.152 (https://doi.or

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- del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A., & Sargatal, J., eds. *Handbook of Birds of the World* Vol. 3: 140, 175. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. ISBN 84-87334-20-2.
- Bourne, W. R. P., Ashmole, N. P. & Simmons K. E. L.: *A new subfossil night heron and a new genus for the extinct rail from Ascension Island, central tropical Atlantic Ocean* in *Ardea*; 91, Heft 1, 2003: pp. 45–51 PDF fulltext (http://si-pddr.si.edu/dspace/bitstream/10088/4493/1/Nycticorax_olsoni.pdf)

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